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AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 301; section 101(a) of Pub. L. 105-277, 112 Stat. 2681; Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1953 (5 U.S.C. App.).

SOURCE: 63 FR 67394, Dec. 4, 1998, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—What Is The Purpose Of These Regulations And To Whom And To What Programs Do They Apply?

§ 15f.1 What is the purpose of these regulations?

These regulations provide the rights of complainants and the procedures for the processing of certain nonemployment related complaints alleging discrimination by USDA that were filed with USDA prior to July 1, 1997, as authorized under section 741(b) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999, enacted in Division A, section 101(a) of the Omnibus Consolidated and Emer-

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gency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1999, Pub. L. 105-277.

§ 15f.2 Who may use these procedures for processing their discrimination complaint with USDA?

A person may use these procedures if he or she filed a nonemployment related discrimination complaint with USDA prior to July 1, 1997, that alleged discrimination by USDA at any time during the period beginning January 1, 1981 and ending December 31, 1996 :

(a) In violation of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (15 U.S.C. 1691 *et seq.*) in administering—

(1) A farm ownership, farm operating, or emergency loan funded from the Agricultural Credit Insurance Program Account; or

(2) A housing program established under title V of the Housing Act of 1949; or

(b) In the administration of a commodity program or a disaster assistance program.

§ 15f.3 If I want to use these procedures to have USDA consider my complaint, how long will it take for USDA to make a decision?

To the maximum extent practicable, a final determination under these procedures will be issued within 180 days after you have filed your request.

§ 15f.4 What do certain words and phrases in these regulations mean?

Agency means the USDA agency, office, or committee that the complainant alleges has discriminated against the complainant in the administration of a covered program.

ALJ means an Administrative Law Judge appointed pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 557(b)(3), 3105) who presides over a hearing if requested by a complainant.

ASA means the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Complainant means a person who requests that USDA consider his or her complaint under the procedures of this part.

Complaint means a written document filed with USDA by a person alleging discrimination by USDA under a covered program.

Covered program means:

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(1) A farm ownership, farm operating, or emergency loan funded from the Agricultural Credit Insurance Program Account;

(2) A housing program established under title V of the Housing Act of 1949; or

(3) A commodity program or disaster assistance program.

Director means the Director of USDA, OCR, or his or her subordinate designee.

Docketing clerk means an employee of the USDA Office of Civil Rights, designated to serve in this capacity.

Eligible complaint means a complaint that was filed with the Department of Agriculture before July 1, 1997, and that alleges discrimination occurring at any time during the period beginning on January 1, 1981 and ending December 31, 1996—

(1) In violation of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (15 U.S.C. 1691 *et seq.*) in administering—

(i) A farm ownership, farm operating, or emergency loan funded from the Agricultural Credit Insurance Program Account; or

(ii) A housing program established under title V of the Housing Act of 1949; or

(2) In the administration of a commodity program or a disaster assistance program.

Ex parte communication means a prohibited communication between a party to a proceeding and the ALJ outside of the presence of, or without notice to, the other parties to the proceeding, as explained more fully in § 15f.13.

Final determination means the final USDA decision made on your complaint under these rules.

Hearing means a proceeding in which you may present your case before the ALJ.

Interested party means a person, other than the complainant, OCR, and the agency, who has an interest in a proceeding under these rules and is admitted to the proceeding under § 15f.20.

OCR means the USDA Office of Civil Rights.

Party or parties means the complainant, OCR, the agency, or a person admitted to the proceeding as an interested party.

Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture.

Section 741 means section 741 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999, enacted in Division A, section 101(a) of the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1999, Pub. L. 105-277.

Section 741 Complaint Request (or Request) means a request by a complainant to consider his complaint under these rules.

USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Subpart B—I Filed A Complaint With USDA Prior To July 1, 1997, How Do I Request That USDA Consider My Complaint Using These Procedures?

§ 15f.5 How do I request that USDA consider my complaint under these procedures?

In order for USDA to consider your complaint under these procedures, a Section 741 Complaint Request must be docketed with the Docketing Clerk in the USDA OCR.

(a) *Do I have to file a “Section 741 Complaint Request” if USDA is already working on my complaint? Do I have to file again?* If USDA OCR already reviewed or is working on your complaint, you will receive a notice by March 1, 1999, indicating that your complaint automatically has been docketed as a Section 741 Complaint Request for consideration under these procedures. The notice will provide you with the docket number assigned your Request and will give you further instructions with respect to what options you have or what actions you must take.

(b) *What if USDA is not working on my complaint? If I think USDA has reviewed or is working on my complaint, but do not receive a letter by March 1, 1999, what should I do?* If USDA is not already working on your complaint, or you do not receive a letter from USDA by March 1, 1999, or within 30 days thereafter, you should file a Section 741 Complaint Request with the Docketing Clerk at USDA OCR.

(c) *How long do I have to file my Section 741 Complaint Request?* You have